

**AGENDA ITEM III B 1**

**PROPOSED ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

**LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY - ALEXANDRIA**

**B.A. IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

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#### **B.A. IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

##### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Louisiana State University at Alexandria (LSU-A) is proposing the creation of a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree program in Communication Studies to be implemented Fall 2008. The proposed program, if approved, will replace the existing Communication Studies major within the Bachelor of Liberal Studies (B.L.S.) degree currently offered by the University. The projected program was approved by the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors in April 2008.

##### **STAFF ANALYSIS**

#### **1. Program Description/Objectives**

The proposal notes the following:

*The Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies will offer students both a comprehensive education in the study of human communication--both as a practical art and an academic discipline--and a strong background in a range of other disciplines in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. Students enrolled in the program will be required to take a nine-hour core of basic courses and to pursue a twenty-seven hour track in either Communication or Mass Communication. While each track offers students significant choice, the curriculum as a whole provides them with a clear structure or framework within which to develop their knowledge and practice of the discipline; thus, although flexible, it does not sacrifice unity or coherence. The proposed program will, of course, require students to meet the requirements of the General Education curriculum shared by all of LSUA's degree programs. Students enrolled in the Communication Studies program, however, will also be required to take eight hours of foreign languages, an additional three hours of English, and additional electives in both the humanities and social sciences. These additional course requirements amplify and deepen the requirements of the university's General Education curriculum and will offer substantial support to the Communication Studies major itself.*

The proposed curriculum totals 125 credit hours, including 39 hours of general education, 36 hours of major requirements, 29 hours of additional requirements, and 21 hours of electives.

## 2. Program Need

With regard to need, when asked if the proposed program has been offered at the University previously, the University responded:

*The proposed degree is similar to LSUA's Bachelor of Liberal Studies (Communication Studies Major), added at the start of the spring 2005 semester; in fact, all but one of the courses that have a place in the proposed curriculum already exist and are being taught on a regular basis. The proposed degree, however, differs from the existing degree in three important respects. First, its title--Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies--has a much more familiar ring to it and indicates much more than the title of the existing degree does that it is a standard baccalaureate offering, similar in its composition to those offered at both public and private four-year institutions in both Louisiana and across the country. The title of the existing degree, by contrast, is less common and routinely requires explanation and clarification. Second, while the existing program certainly offers students a strong foundation in the discipline, it lacks the flexibility to allow them to develop a specialty in a particular area; all majors are required to take the same ten courses. By contrast, the proposed Bachelor of Arts degree will allow majors to pursue either a mass communication track or a communication generalist track. And, as noted in section 1.a, there is also a certain flexibility within each track; students can choose the courses that best correspond to their interests and career goals. Third, the proposed degree requires Communication Studies majors to take several non-Communication Studies courses that are not required by the existing degree. These additional course requirements amplify and deepen the General Education curriculum required of all students pursuing degree programs at LSUA and offer substantial support to the Communication Studies major itself. Specifically, students who pursue the new degree will be required take an additional three hours of English and eight hours of foreign languages. The acquisition of a foreign language offers graduates an obvious advantage in a marketplace in which national boundaries are increasingly irrelevant. Beyond that, however, the kind of intellectual discipline and intense study that learning another language requires will strengthen students' minds and develop their ability to think clearly and systematically.*

*The communication studies faculty consider that the changed title, the increased flexibility, and the additional requirements of the proposed degree substantially increase its value to both our graduates and their prospective employers.*

The proposal notes that Communication Studies is offered at LSU A&M, LSU-Shreveport, UL-Lafayette, UL-Monroe, Southeastern Louisiana University, McNeese State University, Nicholls State University, Northwestern State University and Southern University and A&M.

When asked why an additional program in this area is needed (given that similar programs already exist at Louisiana public institutions), the University responded:

*For two reasons:*

*First, the Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies is not the kind of “niche” program that caters to only a small student population and that cannot, therefore, be duplicated across the state. The proposed degree is, in fact, is a standard baccalaureate offering at most four-year colleges and universities in both Louisiana and across the country.*

*Second, the addition of core Bachelor degree programs at LSUA will result in substantial benefits to the communities that it serves. The area of Central Louisiana from which LSUA is likely to draw students (Economic Development Region 6 plus Allen and Evangeline Parishes) has an adult population (individuals age 25 or older) with a very low level of educational attainment. Only 12.45% of that population have obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher; with the data from Rapides Parish removed (there the percentage is 16.5), the percentage is only 10.3. Less than 10% of the adult population have obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher in seven of the ten central Louisiana parishes. This percentage is significantly below the state average of 18.7% and the national average of 24.4% (all figures from 2000 Census data). As many community leaders in the Central Louisiana region have observed, the dearth of college graduates is a major impediment to economic development in the region. The England Industrial Park Authority, the local Chamber of Commerce, as well as other businesses, industries, and governmental entities, have all noted that an adequately educated workforce requires the presence of a four-year, baccalaureate-granting institution in the region; and that the presence of such an institution significantly increases the region’s ability to draw prospective employees and their families from other parts of Louisiana and from other states.*

*In short, if approved, the proposed Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies would be a substantial and important addition to LSUA’s current set of core degree programs. It would provide employers in the region with graduates well-equipped with indispensable skills---in reading, written and oral communication, and critical thinking--and with the kind of imagination and agility of mind to adapt to new circumstances and to acquire new knowledge and skills even after the completion of their formal education.*

### **3. Students**

In its documentation, the University contends that most of the students currently enrolled in the existing program, the Bachelor of Liberal Studies (Communications Studies major), will enroll in the new degree program should it be approved.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Projected Enrollment</b>	<b>Projected Number of Graduates</b>
<b>2008-2009</b>	69	3
<b>2009-2010</b>	76	11

<b>2010-2011</b>	89	13
<b>2011-2012</b>	100	15
<b>2012-2013</b>	110	18

#### **4. Faculty**

The University indicated that six existing faculty members will be most directly involved in the proposed program. Staff assessment of their vitae reveal that these faculty are well-qualified.

The University anticipates that it will need to hire an additional faculty member to staff the proposed program in Year Two. This position's costs are detailed in Section 9 "Costs."

#### **5. Library Resources**

The institution contends that current library holdings in the Communication Studies field are adequate to initiate the proposed program, but states that additional books and electronic resources will be purchased as needed. As such, a minimum of \$10,000 (averaging \$2,000 per fiscal year) will be needed for library expenditures during the first five years of the proposed program. The University notes that monies for library collections are budgeted through the library and not in the departments. As such, the \$10,000 budgeted for library expenditures is not reflected in the budget shown in Section 9 "Costs."

#### **6. Facilities**

The University purports that it has sufficient classroom space for the program in existing buildings on campus.

#### **7. Administration**

The Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies will be administered by the Department of Arts, English, and Humanities in the College of Arts and Sciences.

#### **8. Accreditation**

There are no specialized accrediting bodies for Communication Studies degree programs.

## 9. Costs

Additional costs for the proposed program are as follows:

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
<b>Faculty</b>		\$52,800	\$55,440	\$58,212
<b>Equipment</b>		\$1,500		
<b>Supplies</b>	\$2,000	\$2,793	\$2,860	\$2,929
<b>Travel</b>		\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>	<b>\$58,093</b>	<b>\$59,300</b>	<b>\$62,141</b>

The proposal states that all costs will be covered through existing state appropriations (59%) and tuition and fees (41%).

### STAFF SUMMARY

As the University transitions to full four-year status and continues to build its academic offerings accordingly, the staff feels that the proposed program would indeed compliment the current offerings by the University. The University has presented a well-justified and well-conceived proposal to establish a separate and distinct B.A. program in Communication Studies. Their request for Fall 2008 approval is reasonable, but a stipulation should be added requiring the appointment of another full-time Communication Studies faculty member by the beginning of AY 2009-2010. Also, as this is a new degree program, monitoring of student numbers and placement of graduates would be appropriate. As such, staff recommends conditional approval with an annual progress report due August 1, 2009, and on that date annually thereafter, addressing the aforementioned issues. Lastly, staff notes that with this conditional approval the concomitant termination of the B.L.S. - Communication Studies major is appropriate.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

*The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant conditional approval for the proposed Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies degree program (CIP Code 09.0102) at Louisiana State University at Alexandria, effective Fall 2008, subject to the following stipulations:*

- 1. By August 1, 2009, the University shall engage the services of an additional, full-time Communication Studies faculty member. A report to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs indicating that this stipulation has been addressed shall be due the same date.*

2. *Beginning August 1, 2009, and on that date annually thereafter, the University shall report numbers of program enrollees, completers, and placement of graduates to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs.*
3. *With implementation of this program, the Communications Studies major in the existing Bachelor of Liberal Studies program is hereby terminated.*